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WASHINGTON – New Mexico’s congressional delegation is urging the Obama administration to immediately back off plans that would eventually lead to the shut down the Los Alamos Neutron Science Center (LANSCE), saying the machine is far too valuable to the country.

The Obama administration last week unveiled its budget, which zeroed out funding for a necessary upgrade of LANSCE. In a letter to Peter Orszag, Senators Jeff Bingaman and Tom Udall, and Representatives Martin Heinrich, Harry Teague and Ben Ray Lujan, outlined various reasons LANSCE must be refurbished and made available for years to come.

For example, they said LANSCE is the only machine in the country that can do a series of diagnostic tests to ensure our nuclear stockpile is safe and secure. Shutting it down would make the ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty more difficult.

The delegation also said LANSCE is used for essential scientific research.

*“LANSCE is a critical tool not only for the stockpile stewardship program but for other non-classified science applications, such as isotope production, nuclear forensics and nuclear fuels analysis, among many uses. It also complements other accelerators, including the Spallation Neutron Source. This non-classified aspect of LANSCE is critical because it attracts the best and brightest students into the stockpile stewardship program, which has an aging workforce ,”* the delegation wrote in their letter to Orszag.

The delegation included a [series of questions](#) for Orszag to answer, including how many stockpile stewardship milestones require the use of LANSCE and how much it would cost to

modify facilities to take on some of the functions that would be lost if LANSCE is shut down.

The LANSCE refurbishment is a five-year, \$150 million project. This year, \$19 million was set aside for the upgrade. As the bill that funds Los Alamos National Laboratory is developed in the coming months, the New Mexico delegation will be working to ensure the LANSCE is funded.